

Sawahata, US Patent 6,501,077, is cited for teaching the detection of reflected electrons at low angles with respect to a sample under inspection. Even if true, the combinations of Chen, Bowes and Sawahata does not render the presently claimed invention obvious. For example, the resulting combination still would not yield the subject matter presently recited in claims 1, 6, 11 and 15. Hence, the present claims are patentable over these references.

Hiroi, US Patent 6,172,365, is cited for purportedly teaching precharging of a sample surface. Even if true, the combination of Chen, Bowes and Hiroi does not render the presently claimed invention obvious. First, the resulting combination still would not yield the subject matter presently recited in claims 1, 6, 11 and 15. Second, as to claims 5 and 10, it is not the surface of the wafer that is precharged, but instead the second feature (which is buried beneath at least the first layer). Hence, the present claims are patentable over the combination of Chen and Hiroi.

If there are any additional fees due in connection with this communication, please charge Deposit Account No. 19-3140.

Respectfully submitted,
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